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EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD ROLE.

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WITHIN 12 WISCONSIN SCHOOL DISTRICTS, THE FOLLOWING GROUPS PROVIDED DATA IN AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD ROLE--(1) 1,794 CITIZENS, (2) ALL MAYORS, CITY MANAGERS OR VILLAGE PRESIDENTS, CITY OR VILLAGE COUNCILMEN, AND TOWNSHIP CHAIRMEN WITHIN EACH DISTRICT, (3) 20 RANDOMLY SELECTED TEACHERS FROM EACH DISTRICT, AND (4) ALL SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS. ONLY A SAMPLE OF FINDINGS WAS REPORTED, AS TOTAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY WERE TO BE PRESENTED IN AUGUST, 1967. DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES, PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOARD MEMBERS, RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION, AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS WERE FOUND TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE KIND OF EXPECTATIONS HELD FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER. WHEN CONSIDERING THE FOUR GROUP CLASSIFICATION VARIABLES, THE SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER GROUP TENDED TO ATTACH LESS IMPORTANCE TO THEIR DECISION-MAKING ROLE THAN DID THE OTHER THREE GROUPS (INDICATIVE OF A REALIZATION OF THEIR ROLE COMPLEXITY AND THEIR RELIANCE UPON OTHER PROFESSIONALS). ALL GROUPS, EXCEPT THE PUBLIC OFFICIALS, VIEWED THE SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER AS A MORE IMPORTANT OFFICIAL THAN A CITY COUNCIL MEMBER. SPECIFIC FINDINGS REVEALED THAT A MAJORITY OF THE TOTAL RESPONDENTS FELT THAT (1) THE BOARD SHOULD ALERT CITIZENS OF ITEMS TO BE COVERED AT COMING MEETINGS, (2) SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS SHOULD BE ELECTED AT LARGE, (3) THE BOARD SHOULD BE ORGANIZED INTO SUBCOMMITTEES, AND (4) BOARD MEMBERS SHOULD BE PAID A SALARY. WHEREAS A MAJORITY OF CITIZENS, PUBLIC OFFICIALS, AND TEACHERS FELT THE SCHOOL BOARD SHOULD SEEK FEDERAL AID, ONLY 19 PERCENT OF THE SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS FELT LIKEWISE. (GB)

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Department of Educational Administration

# EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD ROLE

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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## EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD ROLE

One important purpose of the study upon which the findings reported herein are based was to determine the expectations for the school board role held by citizens, elected officials, teachers, and school board members, themselves. It would certainly appear that the school board occupies a crucial role in our society. As school board members will readily attest, demands are continuously made upon them both from within the school organization and from the community at large; the school board must mediate these demands. It is ironical, however, that prior to the present investigation, little systematic study had been done to assess the nature of the expectations held for the school board role.

To learn what is expected of the school board, 1794 citizens from twelve Wisconsin school districts were interviewed in a study recently conducted in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Wisconsin.[1] Citizens who were interviewed were adults (21 years of age and over) chosen at random using information available from city directories and rural census data. The 1,794 completed interviews represented a response rate of 86 percent of the eligible addresses which were contacted by trained interviewers of the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory. The response rate among the twelve school districts varied from 81 percent to 91 percent. Only 10 percent of the citizens contacted did not wish to be interviewed; 4 percent were either away from home or were otherwise unable to participate.

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[1]James M. Lipham, Russell T. Gregg, and Richard A. Rossmiller, "The School Board As an Agency for Resolving Conflict," U.S. Office of Education Project No. 5-0338-2-12-1, Cooperative Research Program. The research reported herein was supported in part by the U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Regarding age, family income, education, and occupation, the 1,794 citizens interviewed were found to be typical of the adult population of the State of Wisconsin on the basis of comparisons made with 1960 census data. (See Appendix A). Comparisons of the sample with other statewide studies on variables such as political party affiliation also revealed the sample to be typical of Wisconsin adult citizens.[2]

The twelve school districts which participated in the study were selected from among approximately 100 Wisconsin school districts which maintained a kindergarten through twelfth grade educational program and in which at least 1,400 pupils were in average daily membership during the 1963-64 school year. In addition to number of pupils, particular districts were chosen in terms of such factors as equalized valuation of property per pupil, ratio of non-public to public school enrollment and type of fiscal control (independent of the city council or dependent upon it for funds). The twelve school districts ranged in size from an enrollment of 1,440 to 22,750 pupils; from $17,339 to $43,589 in equalized valuation per pupil; and from zero to .526 in ratio of non-public to public school enrollment. Seven of the districts were fiscally independent; five were fiscally dependent, being required to secure the city council's approval of the school district budget.

In addition to interviews with citizens in the twelve school communities, individual interviews were held in each district with the following: (1) public officials, to include the major, city manager or village president, city or village councilmen, and/or township chairmen; (2) a random sample of twenty teachers; and (3) all school board members. The same interview questions asked of citizens were asked of the other groups.

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[2]William H. Streich, "Political Party Affiliation and Expectations for Local Schools," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Educational Administration, The University of Wisconsin, 1966.

The questions related to nature and operation of the board, the educational program, teacher personnel, pupil personnel, finance and business management, and some current issues in the field of education. Ratings of satisfaction and effectiveness of the board of education and the schools also were obtained. The total results of the study are to be presented in a final project report in August, 1967; only a sampling of general and specific findings are reported here.

## Some General Findings

On the basis of the total interview results several interesting, sometimes unanticipated, findings were noted. They relate to strength of expectations; sources of difference in expectations; and the importance of the school board role.

### Strength of Expectations

Although citizens, and to some extent elected officials, had little knowledge about how the board of education actually functioned in the decision-making aspects of its role, nevertheless, they did have definite and specific expectations concerning what the school board and the schools should or should not be doing. In contrast with surveys of other public services, in this study of the public schools there were relatively few persons who answered "Don't Know" or "No opinion." Citizens willingly, and often emphatically, stated their expectations. There were, however, several evaluative-type questions to which large percentages of citizens did respond "Don't Know." For example, 28 percent responded in this manner to the question concerning the quality of the school lunch, 26 percent to the question of how well parents were being informed about the progress

their children were making in school and 31 percent to the question about the adequacy of the counseling and guidance program. Perhaps these findings indicate that citizens who do not have children in the schools are often uninformed about aspects of the schools such as those mentioned above.

The expectations expressed were sometimes limited in scope and they often varied considerably from task area to task area. For example, citizens who held what might be described as conservative expectations concerning the control which the board should exercise over teachers in their private lives at the same time frequently held contrasting liberal expectations concerning the extent to which pupils should be given freedom from control.

With respect to citizens' expectations, those who had children currently enrolled in school were most explicit. Those citizens whose children had completed school, whose children attended non-public schools, or who had no children often were less explicit in their expectations. These findings clearly imply the need for more enlightening communication between the schools and all segments of the public. Incidentally, concerning this implication, over 58 percent of the citizens found out about the decisions the school board makes by reading the local newspaper. The next largest number, comprising 9 percent, received their information through hearsay or personal contact with school personnel. It was found that little use is currently being made of such public relations techniques as representative attendance at meetings, school publications or newsletters, or radio and television.

With regard to teachers' expectations, it was found that teachers, as a group, possessed limited knowledge about school board operation and had considerably less knowledge than one might expect concerning the functioning

of the board with respect to such matters as educational program, pupil personnel, finance and business management and even the area of staff personnel. Such findings indicate that considerably more attention should be given to improved pre-service and in-service training of teachers concerning school administration, generally, and concerning school board operation, specifically. Regarding this implication, additional in-service training of this kind would be of value to school board members, themselves, since school board members also evidenced considerable disagreement concerning their functions, the nature of what the educational program should be, and the relative emphasis within the various segments of the educational program.

Sources of Difference in Expectations

The following factors, among others, were found to be associated with the kind of expectations held for the school board member: demographic variables, such as size and nature of the community; personal variables of the board members, themselves; religious affiliation; political party affiliation; and socio-economic status. Of course, there were also substantial areas of over-all agreement in expectations for the school board role and for the public schools, but some of the most striking differences may be worthy of note.

Considerable consistent evidence was found to document the fact that the role of the board member in the smaller rural school district is substantially different from that of his urban counterpart. In small rural districts, for example, respondents tended to place considerably greater restraints upon pupils, teachers, administrators, and even board members than did respondents in large urban districts. Contrary to popular notions, however, board members in small rural districts were not found to be any "closer" to their constituents in their expectations,

nor were they accorded greater esteem than board members in large urban districts.

The personality of the individual board member was found to be related to his effectiveness as judged by fellow board members. Larson[3] found level of schooling, tenure on the board, values held, and degree of open- or closed-mindedness to be related to effectiveness. Osterndorf[4] found the following to be characteristic of effective board members:

a. Exercises good judgment
b. Holds strong convictions; doesn't yield to pressure
c. Speaks well
d. Knowledgeable about schools and school board functions
e. Open-minded; listens to others
f. Intelligent
g. Fair

In striking contrast, Osterndorf found that personal and behavior characteristics of ineffective school boards, as perceived by fellow school board members, were as follows:

a. Too quiet, speaks poorly
b. New member; inexperienced
c. Lacks knowledge
d. Abrasive personality
e. Lack of conviction
f. Lack of good judgment
g. Lack of education

Meggers[5] reported that expectations for the schools were significantly related to religious affiliation and that inconsistency in the nature of expectations were revealed among the various task areas involved in the school. In other words, there is neither a consistent conservative nor a consistent liberal expectation pattern for all items of the school system

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[3]Raymond O. Larson, "School Board Members' Values, Belief Systems,and Satisfaction with the School Board Role," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Educational Administration, The University of Wisconsin, 1966.

[4]Alan D. Osterndorf, "Expectations and Satisfactions of Effective and Ineffective School Board Members," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Educational Administration, The University of Wisconsin, 1966.

[5]John F. Meggers, "Expectations for the Role of the Board of Education held by Parochial- and Public-School Oriented Parents," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Educational Administration, The University of Wisconsin, 1966.

operation; people may have liberal expectations for educational programs but conservative expectations for pupil control and discipline. Meggers found that the most conservative group in Wisconsin was Lutherans who sent their children to private schools. Furthermore, Lutherans who sent their children to public schools held significantly different expectations than Lutherans who sent their children to private schools.

Streich[6] found a significant relationship between political party affiliation of respondents and their expectations, but the relationship was not always what one might surmise. The expectations varied from one task area to another and were neither systematically related nor consistently directional. For example, on some items, independents were more conservative than either Democrats or Republicans; on other items, independents were more liberal than any other group.

Regarding socio-economic status, Carver[7] found systematic and directional relationships between income and educational level of respondents and their expectations for the school system with respect to educational programs and academic freedom. Furthermore, family income relative to the average income within the community was more intimately related to nature of expectations for the schools than was the absolute level of family income.

Importance of the School Board Role

Two means were employed to assess the importance of the school board role. First, actual importance was measured by giving respondents a list of decisions typically made in the schools such as, selection of sites for new schools, selection of new teachers, preparing the budget, choosing

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[6]William H. Streich, op. cit.

[7]Fred D. Carver, "Relationships Between Education Level, Family Income and Expectations of Citizens for the Role of the School Board," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Educational Administration, The University of Wisconsin, 1966.

textbooks, or inspecting school buildings for needed maintenance and were asked to indicate who should take the most important part in making the decision. Second, relative importance was measured by asking questions such as, "Which position do you think is more important; being a member of the school board, or being a member of the city (or village) council?"

Regarding actual importance of the school board role, the results were not as one might have predicted. Members of boards of education tended to attach less importance to the position of board members than did citizens at large, teachers, or public officials. In fact, many board members appeared to engage in role avoidance, delegating to the superintendent of schools most of the responsibilities assigned to the board by the citizens, teachers, and officials. As Fowlkes[8] has noted, however, these differences in esteem accorded the school board role may be the result of one or more of the following:

a. Board members may recognize the complexity of their role better than those outside the board do.
b. Board members may recognize the extent to which they must rely on professional advice and counsel.
c. Board members may recognize that the range of decisions which rests within their hands is much more limited than the average citizen perceives.

In view of the foregoing, the crucial importance of the role of the superintendent of schools is underlined by the extent to which school board members rely on his professional expertise. Although not measured in the present study, one might surmise that members of the public at large also would have little knowledge of the function or role of the superintendent, as well as little understanding of how the school system "works."

Data regarding the importance of the school board position in comparison with the city council position are shown in Table 1. Of course, a substantial majority of school board members thought the position of school board

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[8]John Guy Fowlkes, "Citizens' Expectations of School Boards," Stanford, California: Stanford University, Cubberly Conference, 1966. (In press.)

TABLE 1

WHICH POSITION DO YOU THINK IS MORE IMPORTANT: BEING A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OR BEING A MEMBER OF THE CITY (VILLAGE) COUNCIL?

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| School Board | 747 | 42 | 45 | 25 | 146 | 61 | 76 | 42 |
| Both Same | 464 | 26 | 61 | 33 | 38 | 16 | 12 | 12 |
| Council | 374 | 21 | 73 | 40 | 48 | 20 | 9 | 9 |
| Don't Know | 208 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Not Ascertained | 1 | * | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 4 |
| Total | 1794 | 101 | 183 | 100 | 240 | 100 | 102 | 100 |

member was more important. Public officials, however, while tending to view the position of councilman as more important than that of school board member, also ascribed considerable importance to the position of school board member. One-third of the public officials interviewed attached equal importance to the two positions and one-fourth of them expressed the view that the position of school board member was more important than the position of councilman. In contrast, only 9 percent of the school board members interviewed thought that the position of councilman was more important than that of school board member, while nearly three-fourths of the board members thought that the position of school board member was more important. The number of citizens who thought the position of school board member more important was double that of the number who thought the position of councilman more important. About one-fourth of the citizens thought that the two positions were of equal importance. Although a majority of the teachers who were interviewed thought the position of school board member to be more important, one-fifth of the

teachers regarded the position of councilman as being of greater importance.

Clearly, the position of school board member was accorded considerable importance in comparison with that of city or village council member. Even a majority of the sample of public officials, which was predominantly members of city or village councils, thought that the position of school board member was equal or greater in importance compared with that of councilman. The fact that over two-thirds of the citizens rated the importance of the position of school board member equal to, or greater than, that of city or village council member suggests that among local governmental offices, the position of school board member is accorded considerable esteem.

Citizens were also asked whether they would consider running for the school board. Fourteen percent stated they would consider seeking membership on the school board; 84 percent replied they would not consider running for membership. The reason most frequently cited for not running for the school board was that the respondent considered himself unqualified, too busy, too young or too old, or too poorly educated. Those who stated they would consider running for membership on the school board tended to cite such reasons as, "An interest in children" and "It would be my civic responsibility."

## Some Specific Findings

Specific questions were asked all interviewees relating to such categories as nature and operation of the school board, the educational program, teacher personnel, pupil personnel, finance and business management, and current issues in education. Some specific expectations relating to each of these categories will next be presented and discussed briefly.

Operation of the School Board

Several questions revealed substantial agreement in expectations regarding the operation of the school board. For example, a majority of all respondents felt that the board should let the people know beforehand the items that would be covered on the agenda of the next board meeting; that board members should be elected at large, rather than by sections of a district; and that the board should be organized into sub-committees, rather than functioning as a whole without sub-committees. A majority of all groups (except school board members, themselves) felt that board members should be paid a salary--at least enough money to cover expenses for attending meetings.

There was general agreement among the four groups that school board members should not serve as a spokesman for a particular group of persons. Each person was asked, "Do you think it is a good idea, or not, for a member of the school board to serve as a spokesman for a particular group of persons, such as an occupation, business or religious group?" Nearly half (49 percent) of the citizens interviewed responded that this was not a good idea. School board members were overwhelmingly opposed to such a practice, as were a majority of the teachers and public officials. Twenty-seven percent of the citizens and 27 percent of the public officials thought the idea was a good one, perhaps reflecting the facts that municipal officials frequently are elected to represent the residents of a ward or are perceived as representing the interests of a particular group of people. Relatively few of the respondents took a middle position, i.e., both a good and a bad idea. They tended to think the idea either good, or bad, rather than giving an ambigious response. Also, relatively few respondents declined to express their opinion as to the merit of the idea.

The responses suggest that school board members tend to be viewed as arbiters, not advocates, insofar as the desires of special interest groups are concerned. Citizens in urban school districts were more inclined to state that it was a good idea for a school board member to speak for particular groups than did citizens in rural school districts. School board members, whether from urban or rural districts, were almost universally opposed to such a practice. The complete breakdown of responses for this question is presented in Table 2.

The question of whether or not the school board should appoint citizen's committees to advise it regarding specific problems confronting the schools is often debated by school board members and administrators. Respondents were asked: "Do you think it is a good idea for the school board to have citizen's committees to advise the board on ways to solve problems facing the schools?" As shown in Table 3, citizens, school board members, teachers, and public officials were of practically the same opinion on this question. Between 57 and 67 percent of the respondents in each of the four groups thought it was a good idea for the school board to have citizen's committees. School board members were less enthusiastic about the idea than were members of the other groups, with 41 percent of them opposed. Thirty percent of the teachers and 30 percent of the public officials interviewed expressed opposition to the idea while one-fifth of the citizens responded negatively.

Citizens who replied affirmatively to the question were requested to identify some problems with which they thought that such a committee could be helpful. The problems most frequently mentioned were those related to a school building program, curriculum revision, pupil transportation, pupil discipline, and public relations. Those who responded negatively to the question were queried as to why they thought citizen's committees

TABLE 2

DO YOU THINK IT IS A GOOD IDEA, OR NOT, FOR A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL BOARD TO SERVE AS A SPOKESMAN FOR A PARTICULAR GROUP OF PERSONS, SUCH AS AN OCCUPATION, BUSINESS, OR RELIGIOUS GROUPS?

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| A Good Idea | 494 | 27 | 49 | 27 | 44 | 18 | 2 | 2 |
| Both a Good and Bad Idea | 189 | 10 | 23 | 13 | 27 | 11 | 7 | 7 |
| Not a Good Idea | 874 | 49 | 102 | 56 | 165 | 69 | 92 | 90 |
| No Opinion | 236 | 13 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Not Ascertained | 1 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 1794 | 99 | 183 | 101 | 240 | 100 | 102 | 100 |

TABLE 3

IS IT A GOOD IDEA FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD TO HAVE CITIZENS' COMMITTEES TO ADVISE THE BOARD ON WAYS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS FACING THE SCHOOLS?

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Yes | 1179 | 66 | 123 | 67 | 156 | 65 | 58 | 57 |
| No | 359 | 20 | 54 | 30 | 73 | 30 | 41 | 41 |
| No Opinion | 254 | 14 | 5 | 3 | 11 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| Not Ascertained | 2 | * | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 1794 | 100 | 183 | 101 | 240 | 100 | 102 | 101 |

were not a good idea. Two reasons were mentioned most frequently: (1) solving school problems is the responsibility of the board of education and (2) involving too many people in school board decisions is likely to result in confusion and delay.

The Educational Program

In general, respondents tended to rate the educational program of their public schools as good, very good, or excellent--and this regardless of program differences among the twelve districts. There was a tendency on the part of all groups to favor college preparatory courses over vocational courses, to feel definitely that extracurricular activities should be tax supported, and to feel strongly that a summer school program should be provided. Moreover, there was a belief that the school board should allow considerable academic freedom at the high school level, permitting teachers and pupils to discuss the pros and cons of Communism, the beliefs of various religious groups, and theories of evolution. Finally, the school board was strongly urged to budget money for experiments with new teaching methods and materials (See Table 4).

Teacher Personnel

Numerous questions were asked concerning the role of the board of education in relation to the teaching staff. On many of the questions there was substantial agreement. In general, the quality of the teaching staff was rated as good to excellent. Moreover, the teacher was viewed as a professional to a much greater extent than historically has been the case. Insofar as personal freedom was concerned, most respondents felt that teachers should not be required to live within the school district, that it is permissible for teachers to smoke or drink alcoholic beverages in public and when not involved in school activities, and that teachers should not be discouraged from active participation in political organizations.

TABLE 4

THE SCHOOL BOARD SHOULD BUDGET MONEY FOR EXPERIMENTS WITH NEW TEACHING METHODS AND MATERIALS.

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Strongly Agree | 123 | 7 | 13 | 7 | 74 | 31 | 34 | 33 |
| Agree | 1221 | 68 | 122 | 67 | 138 | 58 | 45 | 45 |
| Agree-Disagree | 145 | 8 | 15 | 8 | 23 | 10 | 14 | 14 |
| Disagree | 223 | 12 | 29 | 16 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 8 |
| Strongly Disagree | 13 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| No Opinion | 67 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| Not Ascertained | 2 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| Total | 1794 | 100 | 183 | 101 | 240 | 101 | 102 | 100 |

Regarding salaries and other benefits, at least three-fourths of the school board members and of the public officials indicated that they thought the pay scale for public school teachers in their school district was about right (See Table 5). Twenty percent of the citizens, 22 percent of the school board members, 38 percent of the teachers and 12 percent of the public officials felt that the pay scale for teachers was too low, while no more than 3 percent of any of the groups of interviewees felt that the pay scale was too high. Almost one-third of the citizens interviewed had no opinion about the pay scale for teachers. This fact may mean that many citizens are uninformed about the amount of pay which teachers in their districts actually do receive.

On other salary questions, over two-thirds of all respondents felt (1) that a male teacher with children should not receive a higher salary than an unmarried teacher and (2) that teachers who plan and supervise

TABLE 5

DO YOU FEEL THE PAY SCALE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THIS DISTRICT IS TOO LOW, ABOUT RIGHT OR TOO HIGH?

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Too Low | 365 | 20 | 22 | 12 | 90 | 38 | 23 | 22 |
| About Right | 837 | 47 | 145 | 79 | 148 | 61 | 75 | 74 |
| Too High | 48 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| No Opinion | 541 | 30 | 9 | 5 | - | - | - | - |
| Not Ascertained | 3 | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 1794 | 100 | 183 | 100 | 240 | 100 | 102 | 100 |

student activities outside of school time should receive a higher salary than teachers who do not do this. Respondents generally agreed with the proposition that the school board should give leaves of absence with partial pay to allow teachers to take additional college work if they agree to return to the local school district (See Table 6). Over 50 percent of each group agreed, or strongly agreed, that the school board should employ teachers during the summer to revise courses and develop new courses (See Table 7). Thus, there was a rather surprising acceptance of such recent personnel practices as of granting sabbatical leaves and offering 12-month employment for teachers.

Pupil Personnel

A number of questions were asked to determine the role of the board of education with regard to the pupils in the public schools. Many of these questions revealed substantial disagreements, both among the four groups of respondents and within each group of respondents. Regarding whether or not pupils should be permitted to be absent from school for

TABLE 6

THE SCHOOL BOARD SHOULD GIVE LEAVES OF ABSENCE WITH PAY TO ALLOW TEACHERS TO TAKE ADDITIONAL COLLEGE WORK IF THEY AGREE TO RETURN TO THE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT.

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Strongly Agree | 88 | 5 | 11 | 6 | 55 | 23 | 11 | 11 |
| Agree | 1069 | 60 | 97 | 53 | 132 | 55 | 37 | 36 |
| Agree-Disagree | 145 | 8 | 18 | 10 | 31 | 13 | 14 | 14 |
| Disagree | 385 | 21 | 53 | 29 | 21 | 9 | 34 | 33 |
| Strongly Disagree | 14 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | * | 6 | 6 |
| No Opinion | 86 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| Not Ascertained | 7 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| Total | 1794 | 100 | 183 | 100 | 240 | 100 | 102 | 100 |

TABLE 7

THE SCHOOL BOARD SHOULD EMPLOY TEACHERS DURING THE SUMMER TO REVISE COURSES AND DEVELOP NEW COURSES.

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Strongly Agree | 39 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 44 | 18 | 14 | 14 |
| Agree | 952 | 53 | 106 | 58 | 127 | 53 | 46 | 45 |
| Agree-Disagree | 197 | 11 | 26 | 14 | 44 | 18 | 9 | 9 |
| Disagree | 438 | 24 | 43 | 24 | 22 | 9 | 32 | 31 |
| Strongly Disagree | 7 | * | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | * | * |
| No Opinion | 153 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| Not Ascertained | 8 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 1794 | 99 | 183 | 101 | 240 | 99 | 102 | 100 |

family vacations, for example, citizens, elected officials, and, to some extent, teachers tended to disagree that such absence should be excused, yet school boards tended to feel that such absence should be permitted. As another example of some disagreement among groups, citizens, board members, and elected officials tended to agree that pupils who have failed a grade should be required to repeat it, yet teachers tended to be more ambivalent, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with this practice. Regarding the question, "Should a pupil who gets married be allowed to participate in extra-curricular activities or not?", there was almost an even split within all groups between those who felt such a pupil should be allowed to participate and those who felt that the pupil should not be allowed to do so.

Detailed responses to two recurring and perennial board of education policy matters regarding pupils are given in Tables 8 and 9. As may be seen in Table 8, there was fairly unanimous agreement that the school should be allowed to decide the proper dress and grooming of pupils--recent lawsuits regarding beards and haircuts of pupils notwithstanding.

School districts vary considerably regarding the age required of a pupil for starting school. Concerning whether or not exceptionally bright pupils should be allowed to start school even though they are younger than the usual starting age, there was some tendency on the part of all four groups to disagree with such a practice (See Table 9). Even so, within the citizen group, over one-fourth of the citizens agreed or strongly agreed with such practices; likewise, 23 percent of both the elected officials and the board members, and 14 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed with such practice.

In evaluating the major personnel service provided pupils, respondents rated guidance and counseling services lower than any of several aspects of the program of the schools. Thirty-two percent of the teachers, 25 percent of the school board members, 23 percent of the elected officials, and 13

TABLE 8

THE SCHOOL SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DECIDE THE PROPER DRESS AND GROOMING OF PUPILS.

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Strongly Agree | 210 | 12 | 33 | 18 | 65 | 27 | 16 | 16 |
| Agree | 1124 | 63 | 125 | 68 | 137 | 57 | 71 | 70 |
| Agree-Disagree | 205 | 11 | 15 | 8 | 30 | 13 | 11 | 11 |
| Disagree | 207 | 11 | 10 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| Strongly Disagree | 20 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | * | * | * |
| No Opinion | 27 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| Not Ascertained | 1 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| Total | 1794 | 99 | 183 | 101 | 240 | 100 | 102 | 101 |

TABLE 9

EXCEPTIONALLY BRIGHT CHILDREN SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO START KINDERGARTEN EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE YOUNGER THAN THE USUAL STARTING AGE.

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Strongly Agree | 66 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Agree | 424 | 24 | 38 | 21 | 24 | 10 | 18 | 18 |
| Agree-Disagree | 107 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 48 | 20 | 12 | 12 |
| Disagree | 1011 | 56 | 104 | 57 | 114 | 47 | 42 | 41 |
| Strongly Disagree | 148 | 8 | 23 | 13 | 43 | 18 | 25 | 25 |
| No Opinion | 36 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | * | * | * |
| Not Ascertained | 2 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| Total | 1794 | 100 | 183 | 101 | 240 | 99 | 102 | 101 |

per cent of the citizens rated the guidance services provided pupils as fair, poor, or very poor. Moreover, nearly one citizen in three did not know enough about the guidance program to rate it.

Finance and Business Management

The data reported in Table 10 shows that there was a very strong belief on the part of all groups of respondents that the amount of money their school board was spending on the public schools was "about right," rather than "not enough" or "too much." Seventy-five percent of the school board members, 70 percent of the public officials, 61 percent of the teachers and 51 percent of the citizens gave the answer "about right."

TABLE 10

OVERALL WOULD YOU SAY THAT THE AMOUNT OF MONEY YOUR SCHOOL BOARD IS SPENDING ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS HERE IS NOT ENOUGH, ABOUT RIGHT, OR TOO MUCH?

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Not Enough | 122 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 81 | 34 | 24 | 23 |
| About Right | 912 | 51 | 129 | 70 | 147 | 61 | 75 | 74 |
| Too Much | 181 | 10 | 40 | 22 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Don't Know | 574 | 32 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 3 | - | - |
| Not Ascertained | 5 | - | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 1794 | 100 | 183 | 100 | 240 | 100 | 102 | 100 |

Almost one-third of the 1794 citizen respondents indicated that they had insufficient information to give a definite answer to this question. The teachers comprised the only group of respondents which gave a substantial percentage of responses (34 percent) which indicated a belief that the school board was not spending enough money on the public schools.

There appeared to be very wide differences of opinion within all four groups of respondents concerning the question of whether the board of education should have pupils pay rental charges for such items as textbooks, workbooks and lockers. As shown by Table 11, only the group of school board members gave a majority response to any one answer. Fifty-six percent of the school board members thought that these items should be provided without cost to the pupils or their parents. The responses of citizens and public officials indicated a slight preference for making no charge for these items, while the responses of the teachers indicated a slight preference for charging pupils a fee for use of the items.

Two questions regarding expectations for purchasing procedures to be followed by the board of education produced some startling, if not contradictory, results (See Tables 12 and 13). Citizens and elected officials felt that "even if the cost is higher the school board should patronize local businesses when buying school supplies", yet they also agreed that "all school supplies and equipment should be purchased by asking suppliers to submit bids on what is needed and then buying from the lowest bidder." To meet such contrasting expectations, the board would apparently have to solicit bids only from local suppliers!

Current Issues In Education

Expectations for the role of the school board were assessed with reference to such issues as participating in federal aid to education and sharing time and facilities with parochial schools.

Attitudes toward Federal Aid. To what extent should the federal government provide financial support for public schools? This question has generated much debate in recent years. Traditionally, school boards have opposed federal aid, and in a few communities, the board of education has refused to accept federal aid for any purpose. To find out how people

TABLE 11

DO YOU THINK THE SCHOOLS SHOULD CHARGE RENTAL FEES FOR ITEMS SUCH AS TEXTBOOKS, WORKBOOKS, AND LOCKERS OR SHOULD THESE BE PROVIDED WITHOUT CHARGE BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT?

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Should Charge | 734 | 41 | 85 | 46 | 113 | 47 | 35 | 34 |
| Depends | 87 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 18 | 8 | 10 | 10 |
| Should be Provided | 876 | 49 | 88 | 48 | 108 | 45 | 57 | 56 |
| Don't Know | 91 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Not Ascertained | 6 | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 1794 | 100 | 183 | 100 | 240 | 100 | 102 | 100 |

TABLE 12

EVEN IF THE COST IS HIGHER THE SCHOOL BOARD SHOULD PATRONIZE LOCAL BUSINESSES WHEN BUYING SCHOOL SUPPLIES, EQUIPMENT AND INSURANCE.

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Strongly Agree | 70 | 4 | 17 | 9 | 12 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Agree | 855 | 48 | 62 | 34 | 71 | 30 | 17 | 17 |
| Agree-Disagree | 211 | 12 | 31 | 17 | 64 | 27 | 15 | 15 |
| Disagree | 555 | 31 | 63 | 34 | 77 | 32 | 48 | 47 |
| Strongly Disagree | 42 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 16 | 7 | 15 | 15 |
| No Opinion | 54 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| Not Ascertained | 7 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 1794 | 100 | 183 | 99 | 240 | 101 | 102 | 101 |

TABLE 13

ALL SCHOOL SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE PURCHASED BY ASKING SUPPLIERS TO SUBMIT BIDS ON WHAT IS NEEDED AND THEN BUYING FROM THE LOWEST BIDDER.

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Strongly Agree | 143 | 8 | 28 | 15 | 34 | 14 | 20 | 20 |
| Agree | 1353 | 75 | 121 | 66 | 108 | 45 | 54 | 53 |
| Agree-Disagree | 127 | 7 | 18 | 10 | 62 | 26 | 15 | 15 |
| Disagree | 112 | 6 | 16 | 9 | 29 | 12 | 8 | 8 |
| Strongly Disagree | 5 | * | 0 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| No Opinion | 47 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| Not Ascertained | 7 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| Total | 1794 | 99 | 183 | 100 | 240 | 100 | 102 | 101 |

felt about federal aid, each person interviewed was asked, "Should your school board work for greater financial aid to its schools from the federal government, or not?" Responses to this question are shown in Table 14.

A majority of the citizens (54 percent) were of the opinion that their school board should work for greater financial aid from the federal government. Clearly, these persons felt the board should play an active rather than a passive role in securing federal financial support. Equally significant is the fact that less than one-fourth of the citizens interviewed were of the opinion that their school board should not work for greater financial aid from the federal government. Inspection of the response patterns for each district revealed that in only four of the twelve districts did fewer than 50 per cent of the citizens interviewed state that their school board should work for increased federal aid, and in no district did fewer than 40 percent of the citizens respond affirmatively to the question. In only one district did the respondents

TABLE 14

SHOULD YOUR SCHOOL BOARD WORK FOR GREATER FINANCIAL AID TO ITS SCHOOL FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OR NOT?

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Should | 978 | 54 | 96 | 53 | 125 | 52 | 19 | 19 |
| Depends | 129 | 7 | 11 | 6 | 44 | 18 | 15 | 15 |
| Should Not | 414 | 23 | 72 | 39 | 62 | 26 | 67 | 66 |
| Don't Know | 265 | 15 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Not Ascertained | 8 | * | 1 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 1794 | 99 | 183 | 100 | 240 | 100 | 102 | 101 |

who felt that the school board should not work for increased federal aid outnumbered those who felt their board should work for federal aid.

In contrast to the view expressed by a majority of citizens, only 19 percent of the school board members believed that the board should work for greater federal aid, while two-thirds of the board members said the board should not work for more federal aid. It is evident that school board members and citizens generally are not in agreement concerning the school board's stand toward federal aid.

The response pattern of teachers and of public officials were quite similar to that of the citizen sample, although a higher percentage of public officials than of citizens were opposed to the school board working for greater federal aid. The issue of federal aid is one concerning which the opinions of school board members definitely differ from the opinions of citizens, teachers, and public officials.

Attitudes toward shared time and facilities. Table 15 reveals that, with the exception of the school board members, a very strong majority of each group of respondents thought that it was a good idea to allow parochial

school pupils to take classes such as industrial arts or home economics in the public schools. Slightly more than half of the school board members also thought it was a good idea. Only 15 percent of the citizens and public officials interviewed replied that they thought it was not a good idea for parochial school pupils to take such subjects in the public schools.

Some sharp divisions of opinion among the groups were revealed by responses to the question as to whether the interviewee's school district should provide transportation to and from school for parochial school pupils. As indicated in Table 16, 73 percent of the school board members and 52 percent of the teachers thought that providing such transportation would not be a good idea while 60 percent of the citizens and 59 percent of the public officials thought that it would be a good idea. Only a small percentage of the respondents failed to express an opinion on this question.

## Summary

To summarize, the present study attempted to assess systematically the expectations held for the role of the school board member by citizens typical of the adult population, elected officials, teachers, and the school board members, themselves, in twelve school districts in Wisconsin. It was found that most respondents possessed definite opinions regarding the school board and the schools which they willingly expressed. These opinions differed in explicitness, depending upon whether or not respondents had children presently enrolled in the public schools. Size of community, personal variables of board members, religious and political party affiliation of respondents, and socio-economic status of respondents were also related to the nature of the expectations held.

School board members were generally accorded high esteem. Likewise, they were often chosen as primary decision makers by all groups except

TABLE 15

DO YOU THINK IT IS A GOOD IDEA OR NOT TO ALLOW PAROCHIAL SCHOOL PUPILS TO TAKE CLASSES SUCH AS INDUSTRIAL ARTS OR HOME ECONOMICS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Good Idea | 1315 | 73 | 144 | 79 | 143 | 60 | 53 | 52 |
| Depends | 98 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 30 | 12 | 15 | 15 |
| Not Good Idea | 273 | 15 | 28 | 15 | 65 | 27 | 34 | 33 |
| No Opinion | 106 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | - | - |
| Not Ascertained | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 1794 | 100 | 183 | 100 | 240 | 100 | 102 | 100 |

TABLE 16

DO YOU THINK IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA OR NOT FOR YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT TO PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM SCHOOLS FOR PAROCHIAL SCHOOL PUPILS AS WELL AS PUBLIC SCHOOL PUPILS?

| Response | Citizens | | Public Officials | | Teachers | | School Board | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Good Idea | 1076 | 60 | 107 | 59 | 83 | 35 | 21 | 21 |
| Depends | 102 | 6 | 11 | 6 | 25 | 10 | 6 | 6 |
| Not Good Idea | 531 | 29 | 61 | 33 | 124 | 52 | 75 | 73 |
| Don't Know | 74 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 2 | - | - |
| Not Ascertained | 11 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | - | - |
| Total | 1794 | 100 | 183 | 100 | 240 | 100 | 102 | 100 |

the board members, themselves, who tended to delegate many of these decision making responsibilities to the superintendent of schools.

Specific findings related to such categories as the operation of the board of education, the educational program, the teaching staff, pupil personnel, and finance and business management revealed substantial areas of agreement among respondents. However, a number of specific disagreements also were evident, indicating that the role of the school board member is, indeed, one of high conflict potential. Finally, substantial disagreements were noted regarding such current issues as federal aid to education and public-parochial school relationships.

On the basis of the foregoing, it is concluded that there exist pressing needs not only for continued assessment of school board role expectations, but also for determining why particular expectations are held, and how these expectations are related to effective performance in the school board role.

APPENDIX A

COMPARISON OF AGE, EDUCATION, FAMILY INCOME, AND OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF THE SAMPLE OF 1,794 CITIZENS WITH 1960 WISCONSIN CENSUS DATA

| Age | Sample of 1,794 Citizens | Wisconsin 1960 Census (Per Cent) |
|---|---|---|
| 21-24 | 6.7 | 7.2 |
| 25-29 | 10.0 | 9.6 |
| 30-34 | 9.1 | 10.3 |
| 35-39 | 10.1 | 10.5 |
| 40-44 | 11.0 | 10.0 |
| 45-49 | 10.6 | 9.9 |
| 50-54 | 9.0 | 8.9 |
| 55-59 | 9.0 | 8.0 |
| 60-64 | 6.6 | 7.1 |
| 65 and over | 17.9 | 16.4 |
| **Years of School Completed** | | |
| 8 | 19 | 23 |
| 12 | 35 | 29 |
| 16 | 6 | 5 |
| **Family Income** | | |
| Less than 1000 | 3.1 | 3.8 |
| 1,000-1,999 | 4.7 | 6.2 |
| 2,000-2,999 | 6.4 | 7.4 |
| 3,000-3,999 | 7.5 | 8.6 |
| 4,000-4,999 | 7.3 | 11.2 |
| 5,000-5,999 | 11.8 | 13.8 |
| 6,000-6,999 | 11.4 | 12.6 |
| 7,000-9,999 | 23.0 | 22.0 |
| 10,000-14,999 | 13.3 | 10.3 |
| 15,000 and over | 6.1 | 4.1 |
| Not Ascertained | 5.4 | 0 |
| **Occupational Status*** | | |
| Professional, technical and kindred | 12.4 | 10.0 |
| Farmers and farm managers | 11.1 | 7.5 |
| Managers, officials and proprietors | 14.1 | 7.2 |
| Clerical and kindred | 12.5 | 12.9 |
| Sales | 4.8 | 7.0 |
| Craftsmen, foremen and kindred | 14.0 | 13.7 |
| Operatives and laborers | 21.2 | 28.1 |
| Private household and service workers | 9.9 | 8.3 |
| Others | --- | 5.3 |

*Percentages for the occupational status analysis of the sample are based on n-1228 respondents. The remainder of the respondents (566) were not in the labor force for this code.